

## THE OHIO DEMOCRAT.

LOGAN, OHIO.

## "THE ETHEL LYNCH."

A Little Western Girl's Brave Deed and Her Reward.

Ira Lynch was the agent at a little station on the Silver Creek railroad, called Halfway. Why the station was called by that odd name is impossible to state, unless it was because it was located about the center of the road. It was not much of a station either, the only building being the shed that contained the engine and pumps which pumped water to the tank that supplied the road engines with water.

Few trains ever stopped for any other purpose, unless they were flagged, as there wasn't a house within two miles of the station, with the exception of the little cabin occupied by the agent and his family, which consisted of himself, his wife, daughter and her little baby brother. Ethel, the daughter, was a sprightly little girl of perhaps twelve or thirteen years of age, and pretty enough for an artist's model, as she sat upon the back of her milk-white pony, man fashion, her legs bare to her knees, and dressed in a gray plaid skirt, a tight-fitting velvet jacket, and a train-bow cap resting jauntily upon her beautiful auburn curls. Ethel Lynch was a prime favorite with the trainmen and regular passengers on the Silver Creek road, and they were always on the alert to get a glimpse of the red-headed girl and the white horse.

Mr. Lynch was formerly engineer on the engine that pulled the train known as the Thunderbolt—a limited express upon the main line of which the Silver Creek road was a branch. But one night train robbers removed a rail from the track, and Ira Lynch (who saved the lives of the passengers entrusted to his care by standing faithfully at his post of duty) was dragged from under the pile of broken and twisted iron and steel that once formed a part of his beloved engine, a burned and bleeding mass. Of all the many people who witnessed the terrible sight, not one thought it possible for him to live; but by careful nursing and a strong determination on his part to live for his wife's and little daughter's sake, he so far recovered as to be able to take charge of the little station at Halfway.

At the time our story opens, Mr. Lynch was standing at the open window of the pump house, gazing intently at some object in the direction of his cabin.

It was at the close of a lovely day in June. The rays of the setting sun (for it lacked but an hour of sunset) shone full in his face. Shading his eyes with his hand, he looked long and earnestly.

"Well, I declare!" he exclaimed, in a tone of surprise, "it's our Ethel! Ma must be feeling better, or she wouldn't leave her alone!"

Being satisfied that everything was all right, he again gave his attention to his work, so as to have things in shape to leave for the night. By the time the task was completed, Ethel had approached to within speaking distance. The pony was walking along very leisurely, under a loose rein, "so as not to scare pa," Ethel had said to herself, as she checked the pony down to a walk.

"Well, how's ma and the baby been, to-day?" inquired Mr. Lynch, as Ethel slid from the pony's back to the ground.

"Oh, they've been splendid all day! Ma wanted to get up, she felt so well."

"I'm glad to hear that, for it don't seem very much like home when ma is sick. Does it?"

"No, indeed! But do you want to know what I came over for?"

"Why, yes, to be sure!"

"Well, listen, and I'll tell you: This afternoon mamma fell asleep and she had an awful dream. It worried her so that she told it to me, and I came over to be sure it wasn't so; but you couldn't make mamma believe it wasn't so, for she said she never could until she had seen you with her own eyes."

"Why? It must have been something terrible to frighten her ma. She isn't a very thin woman, but tell me, and then I'll know for myself."

"Well, mamma said that she saw five men walking up the track. They all wore big bushy whiskers and carried guns. She said she didn't think anything strange about it, but thought they were hunters, until one of them said: 'It must be that he is in the pump-house.' So she just watched them, and sure enough, they came directly here, the big man that spoke being in the lead. They approached the window very cautiously; the big man put his gun through the window and fired. Then she saw you throw up your hands and fall to the ground dead!"

"That was quite a dream, and it's no wonder it frightened her. But you got right back to her ma, and I am well and will be home soon, and she will be satisfied."

"No, she won't either, pa, for she said that she could never believe that it was only a dream, until she had seen you with her own eyes. You must go home. I'll stay and give water to 41's engine, and signal No. 9."

"All right, Ethel, if you think that she will feel any better for seeing me, here are the keys. You be sure and don't stay longer than is necessary, for it will be dark long before you reach home."

"Yes, pa, I'll do just as you say, only do make haste so that ma won't worry. Good-by."

Kissing her father, she waited impatiently until he had taken his leave.

"A girl of whom any man might well be proud, soliloquized Mr. Lynch, as he watched her go. 'What a brave little girl! Ethel, you don't care very much for your old, crippled-up pa, do you?'"

"Then she'd throw her dainty head back as proud as any queen and say: 'I do too love you, Pa Lynch. I had rather be the daughter of a cripple, if he got hurt while doing his duty, as you did, than to have a king for my father, if he were a coward.'"

"Well, she don't think any more of

me than I do of her, so it's an even thing all around."

Thus Mr. Lynch mused, as he walked homeward to assure his invalid wife he was all right.

"I guess I had better tie Snowflake behind the pump-house," said little Ethel, as her father disappeared from view. "Because the foot from the engine makes him all speckled."

That done, she went to examine the switch, to see that it was thrown right for No. 41, the through freight, which was already due.

She had but just returned when the whistle sounded for the station, and a moment later the huge monster came in sight. Ethel, with a gasp, raised the flag, to signal all right, the engineer answered with two short, sharp whistles, and an instant later called for brakes, in order to stop at the station for water.

"Why, there are two sections on run 41, to-night!" Ethel exclaimed, as she saw the two red flags on the engine.

Then the train drew up at the station, the engine was put loose and switched over to the tank for water, after which the train proceeded on its way to Placer City, six miles distant, to sidetrack for No. 9, the fast limited express.

After the second section had gone through the same operation as the first, Ethel entered the pump-house, to make sure that the fire under the boiler was properly banked for the night.

She desired to start for home as soon as No. 9 passed, so as not to alarm her parents by any unnecessary delay. She had been inside but a moment or two, when her attention was attracted by a slight noise at the window.

Imagine her surprise, upon turning around, to see a man standing at the open window, with his gun, which was resting upon the window-sill, aimed directly at her.

"It's another's dream!" she said to herself; but not a muscle moved to show that she was surprised.

"Say, little gal," said the man at the window, "where is the station agent?"

"He is not here, sir. He went away some time ago."

"Where to?" demanded the man, gruffly.

"He went to Keoley's Bar, with supplies for the company's men," replied Ethel, and added, in an undertone: "But that was a long time ago."

"When is the lightning express due?"

"In thirty minutes," said Ethel, as she glanced at the clock above her father's desk.

"Well, I want to board her. Can we do so?"

"No, sir; they do not stop here for water."

"Can't you flag her?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"We have orders not to flag No. 9 unless there is danger ahead."

"Then there will be danger ahead," said the man, and addressing the men, said: "Get to work lively, men, and take up a couple of rails; the express is going to stop here to-night, and don't you forget it!"

Ethel glanced through the window, and, sure enough, there were four men besides the spokesman, making five in all, as her mother had dreamed.

Quick as thought, she turned and sprang through the open door; there was a clatter of a horse's feet upon the hard ground, and an instant later the white pony dashed around the corner of the pump-house and was off with the speed of a deer.

"Bang!" "Bang!" "Bang!" rang the report of firearms in rapid succession. The men had discovered her flight, but in their haste had shot wide of the mark.

"Bang!" "Bang!" "Bang!" "Bang!" rang out a second volley from the repeating rifles. The bridge rein dropped, as Ethel threw up her hands and fell forward on the pony's neck, limp and apparently lifeless. The frightened animal, seeing he was free to go where he chose, dashed headlong down the track, his hoofs clattering and disappearing from view.

"I guess that red-headed imp of a girl won't give us any further trouble," remarked one of the men.

"You're right," said another, "she's fixed all right enough."

Had the speakers stood where they could have seen what was taking place down in the gulch, they would soon have discovered their mistake, for no sooner had the pony reached the bottom than Ethel arose direct in the saddle, gathered up the reins and remarked:

"A pretty good trick for a red-headed girl to play. When they thought me dead they ceased firing; otherwise I might have been killed." Looking at her tiny watch, a present from her father, she added:

"Six miles and only twenty-two minutes in which to make it. Now, Snowflake, fly!"

Loosening a rawhide from the pomel of the saddle, she lashed the pony into a run. One, two, three, four miles are passed. The tender-hearted girl, who under ordinary circumstances would not think of beating her pony, used the lash without mercy, urging him to his utmost speed.

Finally, exhausted, his hand dropped to his side and his head again raised, he saw that it was covered with blood.

"Why?" she exclaimed. "I must have been hit after all. Yes, my skirt is soaked with blood, and, come to think of it, I did feel a stinging pain in my thigh when the men fired; but what of it? We must reach Placer City in time, should it kill us both!"

At last the station was in sight. Only a short half mile and she would be at the end of her journey. But alas! The wind bore a sound to her ears that fairly froze the blood in her veins, a long, shrill whistle, the express calling for a clear track. Ethel shut her teeth tightly and plied the lash with all her strength.

"Faster, Snowflake, faster, faster! Oh! Heaven help us!" she exclaimed. The pony groaned at every jump, yet she urged him to go faster, which depended many lives. On came the iron steed, its grim driver all unconscious of the fact that he was carrying the unsuspecting passengers and the half-million dollars, which the express messenger was so carefully guarding, straight into the hands of a band of train-robbers.

Would she be too late?

Made desperate by the thought, Ethel leaped forward and buried her white teeth deep into the neck of the pony. Made furious by the pain, the almost exhausted animal leaped forward, staggering as he ran. A moment more, and they were at the station. With a gasp, she saw the flag, and Ethel, with a gasp, raised the flag, to signal all right, the engineer answered with two short, sharp whistles, and an instant later called for brakes, in order to stop at the station for water.

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